

The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
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DEAR MEMBER,

When we take a large and long view of the place of Christianity in the world to-day, one of the outstanding facts is the remarkable spread of its influence throughout the world during the past hundred and fifty years. During that time the Church not only followed with its ministrations the rapidly expanding white populations in countries like the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand; but, awakening at the beginning of the nineteenth century from a long period of quiescence, undertook an apostolate in every part of the non-Christian world. As a result of these efforts the Church exists to-day as a world-wide society transcending the differences of nationality and race. Apart from founding new Christian communities in all parts of Asia and Africa, Christian missions were for long the chief pioneering influence in the fields of education, health and social service. A substantial proportion of the leaders of public life in Japan, China and India in the latter part of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries had received their education in Christian institutions, so that the influence of Christian ideas permeated far beyond the circles of its personal adherents.

THE WAR AND THE CHURCHES OF ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Throughout a large part of Asia and the Pacific there have swept over the Churches built up by the labours of successive generations of missionaries the desolating tides of war. A few figures will indicate the extent of the Christian communities affected. In China Protestant Christians number three-quarters of a million and Roman Catholics two and a half millions. In the Philippines, out of a total population of about 15,000,000, 80 per cent profess Roman Catholicism, the conversion having taken place during the centuries of the Spanish occupation. Since the transfer of the islands to the United States, a large number of American missionary societies have been at work and there is a Protestant Christian community of about a quarter of a million. In the Netherlands East Indies, through the work of Dutch and German missions, Protestant Christians number about a million and a half. In Burma there are over 300,000 Christians, mainly Protestant. The islands of the Southern Pacific are famous for their stories of missionary service and achievement, and in all the groups of islands are to be found larger or smaller Christian communities.

Over what is happening in these wide areas the Japanese occupation has cast a veil. What is known is told in the "Survey of the Year," which is an annual feature of the January issue of the *International Review of Missions*¹ and fills eighty pages of the forthcoming number. We have become familiar with the sufferings of the Churches on the Continent of Europe—the restrictions imposed on their work, the persecutions and martyrdoms, the arrest and imprisonment of their leaders. Our fellow-Christians in Asia and the Pacific are now exposed to similar tests. The great majority of the foreign

¹ Edinburgh House, 2 Eaton Gate, London, S.W. 1. 3s. Annual subscription 10s. 6d.

missionaries in the areas occupied by Japan, as well as in Japan itself, have had to leave their posts ; many of the small number who remain are under arrest. The extensive educational work of colleges and schools, much of it of a high quality, has been taken over by the Japanese authorities. The leading idea of the Japanese in the sphere of ecclesiastical order appears to be that of unification, and the union of all Protestant bodies in a single Church, which has been carried into effect in Japan, is being enforced in other areas under Japanese administration. Pressure to bring about this unification is being exerted on the Churches in Korea, Manchuria, occupied China, Formosa and the Netherlands East Indies. It should be added that Japanese Christians, among whom there is a high proportion of men and women of ability and influence, have in many instances shown a genuine concern for the interests of the Church ; and the Scottish and Irish missionaries repatriated from Manchuria speak warmly of the kindnesses shown to them by Japanese Christians.

The effect of these catastrophic happenings on the mind of one who has been a missionary is described in the following letter :—

“ As you know, I am at home on enforced and prolonged furlough from India, and I find that as the time goes on my thoughts are more rather than less with my missionary colleagues, not only in India but with the many in China and elsewhere whom I know. News is scanty, but occasionally one gets hold of odd letters or cables which with a sudden stab bring home the immensity of the changes which are going on and the depth of personal suffering which is involved in them. I have just had a letter, the first for two years, from a friend in China. Only a few weeks after he had got to work in a new job in a hospital the Japanese arrived. There was immediate house internment for him and all his colleagues. He hoped to get away to the west and sent on a few medical books and all his instruments. Then came the joyful news that he was one of those to be repatriated from Shanghai. He wrote sitting on a truckle bed in the skittle alley of the palatial American Club. There had been a muddle and a mistake—he was not to go after all.

“ Hundreds of missionaries have been cut off from their families and from their work, but it is not the separation of persons which counts so much. I think most of us missionaries took that for granted as part of our job when we sailed. What we certainly did not bargain for was the immense destruction of the machinery of our jobs—the schools and hospitals and colleges. Will we ever be able to rebuild them ? Indeed, ought we ever to rebuild them ? The present losses, grievous as they are, may have been worth while if they make us ask ourselves a few questions. Has some of our missionary work been markedly the response of human pity to human need, and have we perhaps at times ‘ despised the Church of God ’ ? The trial by fire of all missionary work in the Far East has come now, and what we may be able under God to do in the future will largely depend on what sort of a Church emerges from the present turmoil. A Church which has grown strong by endurance will lead, and we will have to learn to follow and to give our help where it is most urgently needed. In other places, perhaps, we may have to begin again to rebuild from the very foundations.

“ But most of all at Christmas time I am filled with humble thankfulness to God for the amazing endurance of His people. Tales that leak through of quiet sacrifice, so unselfconsciously borne, make me more proud than I can say to be of this fellowship of the Christian Church. I am not only thinking of a very volatile and hair-brained young man, who was a public danger on a bicycle in the Cambridge of my day, and who has now since the Japanese invasion stayed behind alone on one of the Gilbert Islands to be with his people. I am thinking also of the Samoan teachers in Papua, of the Chinese pastors who have gone to the Far West, and of the many, many others who in loneliness, poverty and hardship are just simply doing their jobs, and by doing them are preaching the Cross.”

A vivid and stimulating picture of the meaning of missionary work in China, as it presents itself to a highly original mind, is given in a small volume that has just been published, *The Art of the Missionary*,¹ by the Bishop of Hongkong, who since the book was written has seen his greatly loved diocese pass under Japanese rule.

¹ Student Christian Movement Press. 2s.

Accounts of the renaissance that is going on in Free China, in which the Christian colleges after long migrations to new sites are taking their full share, have already been given in the News-Letter (C. N-L. Nos. 19, 109). Among the sproutings of new life in the midst of war that will bear a harvest in future years is a joint undertaking to translate the Christian classics into Chinese. A start has been made with such works as the Apology of Justin Martyr, the Epistle of Diognetus, the Church History of Eusebius and St. Augustine's City of God.

THE UNITY OF MANKIND

The reality of the universal Church is not only a fact of great significance in itself, but also a promise for the future relations of mankind. No one who believes what Christianity affirms can question for a moment that our common humanity is more fundamental and important than differences of nation and race—a belief that is to-day vehemently and passionately denied. Even more dangerous than the open attack on it is its apparent lack of power to kindle the imagination and move the wills of those who profess it. Public opinion is very little alive to the possibilities of the association in this war of the Western democracies with the peoples of China, India and Africa.

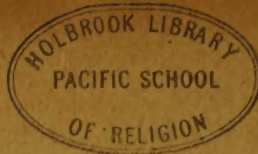
Mr. Wendell Willkie, in his lightning tour round the world, has sensed something of the first importance. He has said some hard things about British imperialism, but in a recent contribution to the *Evening Standard* he frankly recognized that on the American side as well as the British there are racial and economic imperialisms and commercial self-seeking that have to be fought, and his plea in the same article for free and frank discussion between free peoples deserves our whole-hearted response. The problems which Great Britain faces in India and in the colonial empire are a good deal less simple than they seem to be in the eyes of Mr. Willkie; but the first necessity for solving them is a sympathetic understanding of the movement of feeling to which he refers in the following passage:—

"After centuries of ignorant and dull compliance, hundreds of millions of people in Eastern Europe and in Asia are beginning to see the great light. They are no longer willing to be eastern slaves for western profits. I've found that to the peoples of Africa, the Middle East and the whole of the Far East freedom is their Number One war aim. Lately they've begun to wonder whether it is also ours."

Among living statesmen none is more qualified than General Smuts through his power of imagination, unrivalled experience, and relatively detached position to see the world war in its larger perspectives. In his address to a press conference when he was in this country he paid a glowing tribute to China's five years' resistance to the Japanese invasion, describing it as "one of the finest performances of the world war," and prophesying that China is yet going to play an immense part in the war in the days to come. In the same speech he made a significant reference to Mr. Gandhi. Mr. Gandhi's intransigence in recent months has had deplorable consequences, but General Smuts is right in reminding us that, if we are to understand and deal with the Indian situation, we must view it in a longer perspective:—

"It is wrong to talk of Gandhi as a fifth columnist. He is one of the great men of the Asiatic world, and is the last person to be placed in that category. He is dominated by high spiritual ideals, but whether these are practicable in our time is another question. But he is a great patriot, a great man and a great spiritual leader."

The quotation raises questions too large for discussion here; I hope to devote an early News-Letter to the question of India. The point in the present context is that the large, humane vision of General Smuts is the only safe guide through the misunderstandings, perplexities and conflicts in which we are involved to-day.



THE FATE OF THE JEWS

The need for a fresh releasing of the springs of human sympathy and compassion is powerfully brought home to us by the enormity of the evil against which we have to contend. Nothing could exceed in horror the treatment which is being meted out to the Jews. It would appear to be the deliberate intention of the German Government to bring about their complete extermination in Europe, either by direct massacre or by the transfer of the population under conditions in which it is a matter of indifference to those responsible whether the victims live or die. The policy has been carried to the most extreme lengths in Poland, where the death roll has been enormous; but all the occupied countries have been given a date by which to clear out their Jewish population. In Rumania already nearly 200,000 Jews have been transported to concentration camps. Similar action is being demanded in Norway and Holland, and active anti-Jewish measures are being taken in France.

The Christian Churches in these countries have made strong protests, but in vain. Action by the Churches in Holland and France has been reported in the News-Letter (C.N.-L. Nos. 127, 152, 153, 158). With great courage the Provisional Church Council of the affiliated Church organizations in Norway has made a similar solemn protest, declaring that the measures "have provoked unheard of sorrow throughout the country," and appealing to the authorities to stop Jewish persecutions and racial hatred.

Three weeks ago a manifesto signed by all the Swedish Bishops was issued, condemning racial persecution and urging all Swedish Christians to remember the tortured Jews in their daily prayers. The manifesto declares:—

"With horror and dismay we have learned that the un-Christian racial hatred which has spread through various countries like a deadly infection has now given rise to revolting acts of violence among our neighbours in the Scandinavian peninsula. Stirred to the depths, we have listened to the plain words addressed by our oppressed Norwegian sister Church to the wielders of power in Norway, warning them not to contravene God's clear words by using violence in blind racial hatred. Whatever we can do to aid the unfortunate victims of this hatred it is our simple duty as Christians and human beings to do."

The Archbishop of Canterbury in a letter to *The Times* has expressed on behalf of Free Churchmen as well as Anglicans his burning indignation at a horror beyond what imagination can grasp, and has appealed for constant united and most earnest prayer to Almighty God.

Yours sincerely,

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